Missouri
Annual Blind/Visually Impaired Literacy Study
December 2005

Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Division of Special Education

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PURPOSE

The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) Division of Special Education (DSE), per Missouri Revised Statute 162.1136, conducts an annual study of the educational status of eligible blind/visually impaired students and reports the findings to the Missouri Legislature on December 1st each year. Copies of previous studies may be obtained at http://www.dese.mo.gov/divspeced/Blind/literacy.html

BACKGROUND

The information contained in this report pertains to the literacy of eligible blind students. An "eligible student" is statutorily defined as "any blind or visually impaired child, including any student who has a visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye with conventional correction, or has a limited field of vision such that the widest diameter of the visual field subtends an angular distance not greater than twenty degrees (MoRs 162.1130), and who is eligible for special education services for the visually impaired as defined in the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education State Plan (MoRs 162.1136)." For the purposes of this report, "eligible student" is any student meeting the eligibility requirements for visual impairment/blindness in the Missouri State Plan for Special Education - Part B which includes the category of students previously reported as "partially sighted" (see Appendix A for DESE/DSE eligibility definition of visually impairment/blindness).

DATA ELEMENTS

Data Element 1:   The methodology of the study

Data provided in this study were collected from three sources – American Printing House, Inc. (APH) which collects data for the *Federal Quota Registration*, Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) which collects data on all students including students with disabilities and Missouri Department of Social Services Rehabilitation Services for the Blind (RSB) which provides services to individuals with varying degrees of visual impairment.

American Printing House (APH):

Data collected from APH for the *Federal Quota Registration* include students who are eligible to receive materials provided by the Federal Act to Promote the Education of the Blind (e.g. Braille, large print, audio). To be eligible for the Federal Quota Registration, students must meet the definition of blindness, i.e. "central visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye with best correction; a peripheral field so contracted that the widest diameter of such field subtends an angular distance no greater than 20 degrees; or visual performance reduced by a brain injury or dysfunction when visual function meets the definition of blindness as determined by an eye care specialist or neurologist."

Data utilized from APH includes counts of students enrolled in any formally organized public, private, or non-profit educational program of less than college level by grade placement, i.e. preschool and school age categories, and by primary reading medium. The Federal Quota Registration preschool categories include ages 0 to preK5, and the school age categories include grades 5K-12, academic nongraded, vocational, and other registrants enrolled and having an Individualized Education Program (IEP) (see Appendix B-Federal Quota Registration for descriptions). Further descriptive information beyond the scope of this report may be found at http://www.aph.org/fedquotpgm/instr2005.html).

<u>Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)</u>

Data were utilized from the *Core Data Collection System,* DESE's web-based data collection system which is used to collect a variety of federal and state required educational information. The Core Data Collection System includes data concerning students' ages 3-21 with disabilities including students meeting the eligibility requirements for Visually Impaired/Blindness, i.e. "an impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a child's educational performance." This definition includes both partial sight (visual acuity of 20/70 to 20/200 in the better eye with best correction by glasses) and blindness (visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye after best correction by glasses or a visual field measuring 20 degrees or less). These data include counts of students by age and by school district (for further descriptive information, see http://www.dese.state.mo.us/divimprove/coredata/CDcollect.html). Note that many children ages 3 to PreK5 are reported as Young Child with a Developmental Delay (YCDD) regardless of disability type, and therefore would not be included in these counts.

It should also be noted that prior to December 1, 2003, data were collected separately for partially sighted and blind students. Thereafter data are collected as a single disability category, i.e. visual impairment/blindness, a combination of partially sighted and blind students.

Other required data were collected by the Division of Special Education via survey for school years 2001-2002, 2002-2003, 2003-2004 and 2004-2005. The Blind Literacy Survey collects information annually in January concerning the literacy level of students recorded by APH on the *Federal Quota Registration.* This survey yields counts of blind students (ages 3 through 21) who:
- receive and no longer receive Braille reading and writing instruction
- use a slate, stylus or other writing device
- received transition planning services from Rehabilitation Services for the Blind (2003-2004 and 2004-2005 survey)
- were referred to Rehabilitation Services for the Blind (2003-2004 and 2004-2005 survey)

In 2004-2005, a total of 225 public schools and other agencies returned a survey.

<u>Missouri Department of Social Services Rehabilitation Services for the Blind (RSB):</u>

The Missouri Department of Social Services Rehabilitation Services for the Blind provided data regarding the counts of blind/visually impaired students who:
- received transition planning services from Rehabilitation Services for the Blind
- were referred to Rehabilitation Services for the Blind through a school district

For further information, see http://www.dss.mo.gov/fsd/rsb/ and http://www.dese.mo.gov/divspeced/Blind/RSB.html.

<u>Calculations</u>:

The eligibility definition for the Federal Quota Registration contains similar language as the Missouri statutory definition (162.1130RsMO) and the Missouri State Plan for Special Education (see Appendix A and Appendix B). However, reporting requirements for APH and DESE Core Data vary thus yielding different counts. The primary variances are as follows:

- APH Federal Quota Registration counts are collected annually on the first Monday in January on the basis of blindness alone or with other handicapping conditions with no primary handicap designated.
- DESE Core Data counts are collected annually on December 1 on the basis of visual impairment which includes partial sight as well as blindness as primary handicapping conditions. Therefore, the Core Data visual impairment/blindness category includes students who would not be counted on the APH Federal Quota Registration, i.e. partially sighted, but on the other hand would not include some students reported on APH because the primary handicapping condition designated is not partially sighted or blindness, including early childhood special education (ECSE) students in the Young Child with a Developmental Delay category used by many school districts for all ECSE children.

In order to ensure validity given these variances, data from APH and DESE Core Data are not combined for calculation or for comparative analysis, and data sources are notated on all tables and charts.

Data Element 2:   The percentage of eligible students in the study who read Braille, print, or large print.

Blind/Visually Impaired Students **Percentage by Primary Reading Medium** **School Age (5K to 21)**										
Primary Reading Media	School Year									
	2000-2001		2001-2002		2002-2003		2003-2004		2004-2005	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Braille Readers	98	14.1%	106	15.2%	103	15.3%	101	14.6%	101	14.4%
Visual Readers	248	35.7%	238	34.2%	235	35.0%	238	34.3%	233	33.3%
Auditory Readers	31	4.5%	34	4.9%	29	4.3%	35	5.0%	33	4.8%
Prereaders	53	7.6%	55	7.9%	72	10.7%	65	9.4%	73	10.7%
Nonreaders	265	38.1%	263	37.8%	233	34.7%	255	36.7%	245	35.8%
Total School Age	695	100.0%	696	100.0%	672	100.0%	694	100.0%	685	100.0%

Data Source: Data as of 09/07/05 from APH Services, Inc. for Federal Quota Registration. Percentage of Readers = (Number in Primary Reading Media/Number of Eligible Students) x 100.

Primary Reading Media Definitions (APH):

- **Braille Readers -** Students primarily using Braille in their studies.
- **Visual Readers -** Students primarily using print in their studies.
- **Auditory Readers -** Students primarily using a reader or auditory materials in their studies.
- **Prereaders -** Students working on or toward a readiness level; older students with reading potential.
- **Nonreaders -** Nonreading students; students who show no reading potential; students who do not fall into any of the above categories.

Findings:

The percentage and the number of Braille and visual readers have remained consistent over the past five school years (2000-2001 to 2004-2005).

Data Element 3: The number of students who have a visual impairment sufficient to meet the definition of "eligible student" as defined in RsMo section 162.1130.

Note - Data reporting requirements differ between APH and DESE Core Data. See "Calculations" on page 2 for further information.

DESE Core Data
Number of Blind/Visually Impaired Students

	2000-2001*			2001-2002			2002-2003			2003-2004			2004-2005		
	Local Public School Districts	MSB	Total Public School	Local Public School Districts	MSB	Total Public School	Local Public School Districts	MSB	Total Public School	Local Public School Districts	MSB	Total Public School	Local Public School Districts	MSB	Total Public School
Ages 3 to PreK5	NA	NA	NA	26	NA	26	13	NA	13	17	NA	17	21	NA	21
Ages 5K to 21	322	119	441	345	125	469	377	115	490	391	105	496	365	92	457
TOTAL	322	119	441	371	125	495	390	115	503	408	105	513	386	92	478
Annual Percent Increase/Decrease	—	—	—	15.2%	5.0%	12.2%	5.1%	-8.0%	1.6%	4.6%	-8.7%	2.0%	-5.4%	-12.4%	-6.8%

Data Source: Data as of 09/07/05 from Screen 11 of Core Data of DESE Core Data Collection System. Totals for Ages 3 to PreK 5 are not applicable to MSB which serves students ages 5K and older.
*Prior to School Year 2001-2002, counts of early childhood students (ages 3-preK5) were not reported by disability category.

APH Federal Quota Registration
Number of Blind/Visually Impaired Students

	2000-2001			2001-2002			2002-2003			2003-2004			2004-2005		
	Other Public & Private Schools	MSB	Total	Other Public & Private Schools	MSB	Total	Other Public & Private Schools	MSB	Total	Other Public & Private Schools	MSB	Total	Other Public & Private Schools	MSB	Total
Ages 3-PreK5	102	4	106	121	NA	121	128	NA	128	132	NA	132	132	NA	132
Ages 5K to 21	589	106	695	581	115	696	566	106	672	598	96	694	603	82	685
TOTAL	691	110	801	702	115	817	694	106	800	730	96	826	735	82	817
Annual Percent Increase/Decrease	—	—	—	1.6%	4.5%	2.0%	-1.1%	-7.8%	-2.1%	5.2%	-9.4%	3.3%	0.7%	-14.6%	-1.1%

Data Source: Data as of 09/07/05 from American Printing House Services, Inc. for Federal Quota Registration. Other Public & Private Schools include any formally organized public or private, nonprofit educational program of less than college level (see Appendix B for further information).
*School year 2000-2001 was the last year MSB operated a preschool program.

Findings:

Based on DESE Core Data, the number of blind/visually impaired students educated in Missouri School for the Blind decreased over the five year period from 2000-2001 to 2004-2005; over this same five year period, the number blind/visually impaired students educated in other Missouri public schools increased except in 2004-2005 which decreased. Overall, DESE Core Data for the five year period reflect a decrease in the percent educated in MSB and an increase in the percent educated in other Missouri public schools.

Data Element 4:   The number of students currently reading Braille, large print, and standard print.

Grade or Level	2000-2001			2001-2002			2002-2003			2003-2004			2004-2005		
	Braille Readers	Visual Readers	Total	Braille Readers	Visual Readers	Total	Braille Readers	Visual Readers	Total	Braille Readers	Visual Readers	Total	Braille Readers	Visual Readers	Total
Academic Nongraded	3	14	17	2	5	7	8	7	15	6	7	13	5	5	10
K	6	8	14	5	6	11	3	12	15	2	9	11	5	3	8
1	4	13	17	6	16	22	5	10	15	9	14	23	9	12	21
2	4	10	14	9	14	23	5	18	23	4	15	19	7	18	25
3	11	12	23	5	13	18	6	17	23	8	19	27	6	13	19
4	10	15	25	9	10	19	6	16	22	4	17	21	7	26	33
5	8	15	23	11	16	27	6	12	18	6	23	29	5	25	30
6	5	17	22	8	13	21	9	14	23	9	17	26	7	20	27
7	11	23	34	5	18	23	6	13	19	8	15	23	8	16	24
8	7	23	30	9	22	31	7	20	27	7	17	24	8	13	21
9	10	17	27	8	19	27	11	23	34	6	16	22	8	16	24
10	9	22	31	14	19	33	9	17	26	11	21	32	4	13	17
11	4	24	28	7	25	32	10	18	28	8	22	30	11	22	33
12	2	22	24	4	25	29	6	24	30	10	15	25	7	24	31
Other Registrants	4	12	16	4	16	20	6	13	19	3	11	14	4	7	11
Vocational	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	98	248	346	106	238	344	103	235	338	101	238	339	101	233	334
Percent of Total	28.3%	71.7%	100.0%	30.8%	69.2%	100.0%	30.5%	69.5%	100.0%	29.8%	70.2%	100.0%	30.2%	69.8%	100.0%

Number of Braille and Visual Readers by Grade/Level

Data Source: Data as of 09/07/05 from APH Services, Inc. for Federal Quota Registration.

Findings:

The number of Braille and visual readers has remained consistent over the past five school years (2000-2001 to 2004-2005).

Data Element 5: The number of Braille-reading students who no longer receive any instruction in Braille reading and writing but do receive materials in Braille and Braille-related services.

Braille Readers Receiving Braille and Related Services and/or Materials But Not Receiving Braille Reading/Writing Instruction				
School Year	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
Number of Non-Instructional Recipients	20	23	38	20
Total Braille Readers (instructional & non-instructional)	106	103	101	101
Percent of Total Braille Readers	18.9%	22.3%	37.6%	19.8%

Data Sources: Number of non-instructional recipients (Braille readers not receiving Braille reading and writing instruction) from Blind Literacy Survey from DESE-DSE. Total Number of Braille Readers from APH Services, Inc. for Federal Quota Registration as of 09/07/05. Percentage of Total Braille Readers = (Number of Non-Instructional Recipients/Total Braille Readers) x 100.

Findings:

The number and percent of Braille readers receiving Braille and related services materials but not receiving Braille reading or writing instruction increased in 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 and decreased in 2004-2005.

Data Element 6: The number of certified vision teachers or teachers of the blind or visually impaired who are currently employed in the field in the State of Missouri.

Teachers Certified in Blind/Partially Sighted Employed in Missouri Public Schools					
	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
Local Public School Districts	78	76	77	76	81
MSB	15	17	17	15	17
Total Count	93	93	94	91	98

Data Source: Data as of 11/22/05 from Core Data and Certification from DESE. Counts are of teachers certificated in Blind/Partially Sighted (K-12), employed in any Missouri public school and teaching any special education class.

Findings:

The number of certified vision teachers or teachers of the blind or visually impaired currently employed in the field in the State of Missouri by local Public school districts and MSB has remained consistent over the past 5 years with a slight increase in 2005.

Data Element 7:   The number of eligible students who use a slate and stylus and/or other devices in writing Braille.

Blind/Visually Impaired Students Number Using Slate/Stylus and/or Other Device in Writing Braille				
School Year	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
Number Braille Writers	183	162	172	124
Total Braille and Visual Readers	344	338	339	334
Percent of Total Braille and Visual Readers	53.2%	47.9%	50.7%	37.1%

Data Sources: Number of Braille Writers from Blind Literacy Survey from DESE-DSE. Percentage of Total Braille and Visual Readers = Number of Braille Writers/Total Number of Braille and Visual Readers. Number of Braille and Visual Readers from APH Services, Inc. for Federal Quota Registration as of 09/07/05.

Findings:

The number of eligible students who use a slate/stylus or other writing devices in writing Braille was consistent from 2001-2002 to 2003-2004 and decreased in 2004-2005.

Data Element 8: The number of eligible students educated in the general classroom, in an itinerant or resource classroom, in a self-contained classroom, or in a separate educational facility. [1]

	Blind/Visually Impaired Students Number of School Age (5K-21+) Placements by Age 2004-2005									MSB	
	LOCAL PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT PLACEMENTS									MSB	
Age	Outside Regular Class <21%	Outside Regular Class 21% to 60%	Outside Regular Class >60%	Private Separate Day Facility	Public Separate Day Facility	Homebound /Hospital	Private Residential Facility	Total Local Public Schools	Total MSB	TOTALS
5K	3	2	1	1	0	0	0	7	0	14
6	18	7	5	1	0	0	0	31	0	62
7	16	5	1	0	0	1	0	23	3	49
8	16	4	2	1	0	0	0	23	4	50
9	18	9	0	0	3	0	0	30	6	66
10	26	6	3	0	0	0	0	35	4	74
11	18	8	2	0	0	0	0	28	3	59
12	24	4	0	0	0	0	0	28	6	62
13	15	6	3	1	0	0	0	26	6	58
14	23	8	3	0	0	0	0	34	4	72
15	22	4	3	0	0	0	0	29	11	69
16	10	7	3	0	0	0	0	20	3	43
17	19	8	4	0	1	0	0	33	19	85
18	8	4	3	0	0	0	0	15	6	36
19	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	4	10	18
20	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	7	9
21+	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL SCHOOL AGE	238	83	34	4	5	1	0	365	92	457
Percent of Total	52.1%	18.2%	7.4%	0.9%	1.1%	0.2%	0.0%	79.9%	20.1%	100.0%

Data Source: Data as of 09/12/05 from Screen 11 of Core Data from DESE Core Data Collection System.

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[1] Placement categories are designated as follows : General classroom = Outside Regular Class <21%
Itinerant or Resource = Outside Regular Class 21% to 60%
Self-Contained = Outside Regular Class >60%

Data Element 8: The number of eligible students educated in the general classroom, in an itinerant or resource classroom, in a self-contained classroom, or in a separate educational facility (CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE).

Blind/Visually Impaired Students Number of School Age (5K-21+) Placements by Age										
	2000-2001		2001-2002		2002-2003		2003-2004		2004-2005	
Placement										
Local School District Placements	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Outside Regular Class <21%	212	48.1%	217	46.3%	246	50.2%	243	49.3%	238	52.1%
Outside Regular Class 21% to 60%	74	16.8%	89	19.0%	91	18.6%	91	18.5%	83	18.2%
Outside Regular Class >60%	26	5.9%	26	5.5%	28	5.7%	38	7.7%	34	7.4%
Private Separate Day Facility	2	0.5%	4	0.9%	4	0.8%	5	1.0%	4	0.9%
Public Separate Day Facility	5	1.1%	5	1.1%	2	0.4%	6	1.2%	5	1.1%
Homebound/Hospital	2	0.5%	2	0.4%	3	0.6%	3	0.6%	1	0.2%
Private Residential Facility	1	0.2%	1	0.2%	1	0.2%	2	0.4%	0	0.0%
Total Local School District Placements	322	73.0%	344	73.3%	375	76.5%	388	78.7%	365	79.9%
Total MSB	119	27.0%	125	26.7%	115	23.5%	105	21.3%	92	20.1%
TOTAL	441	100.0%	469	100.0%	490	100.0%	493	100.0%	457	100.0%

Data Source: Data as of 09/12/05 from Screen 11 of Core Data from DESE Core Data Collection System.

Findings:

Over the past five school years (2000-2001 to 2004-2005), the number of blind/visually impaired students educated in the continuum of placements within Missouri public schools is shifting from MSB to local school district placements.

Data Element 9:   The graduation rate of eligible students compared to those students who are not disabled.

Since the total sum of blind/visually impaired graduates and dropouts is typically less than 40 students statewide, graduation rates tend to vary significantly from year to year, i.e. the addition of one dropout can cause the graduation rate to drop significantly. Therefore, when comparing trends in blind/visually impaired graduation rates, this factor should be taken into consideration.

	Graduation Rates Blind/Visually Impaired Students and All Students				
	Blind/Visually Impaired			All	
Year	Number of Graduates	Number of Graduates & Dropouts	Graduation Rate	Number of Graduates	Graduation Rate
2000-2001	34	40	85.0%	54,181	81.4%
2001-2002	43	46	93.5%	54,513	82.4%
2002-2003	32	44	72.7%	56,906	84.4%
2003-2004	30	36	83.3%	57,985	85.5%
2004-2005	34	37	91.9%	57,458	85.4%

Data Source: Data as of 10/14/05 from DESE Core Data Collection System.
Formulas:
- Students with Disabilities Graduation Rate: Number of graduates / (number of graduates + number of dropouts) x 100
- All Students Graduation Rate: (Graduates / (9-12 Cohort Dropouts + Graduates)) x 100
- Dropouts include exit categories Received a Certificate, Reached Maximum Age, Moved Not Know to be Continuing and Dropped Out

Blind/Visually Impaired Students Number of Dropouts					
Exit Category	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
Received Certificate	0	0	0	0	1
Reached Maximum Age	0	0	1	0	0
Moved, Not Known to be Continuing	5	0	7	2	0
Dropped Out	1	3	4	4	2
TOTAL DROPOUTS	6	3	12	6	3

Data Source: Data as of 10/14/05 from DESE Core Data Collection System.

Findings:

In general, the graduation rate for blind/visually impaired students has been comparable or greater than the graduation rate for all students in Missouri public schools with the exception of the 2002-2003 school year.

Data Element 10:   The number of eligible students who did not meet graduation requirements but were terminated from formal education having reached age twenty-one.

Blind/Visually Impaired Students Number Who Reached Age 21 Without Attaining a High School Diploma	
School Year	Number
2000-2001	0
2001-2002	0
2002-2003	1
2003-2004	0
2004-2005	1

Data Source: Data as 09/12/05 from Screen 12 of Core Data from DESE Core Data Collection System. Number includes Reached Maximum Age and Received Certificate Exit Categories.

Findings:

The number of blind/visually impaired eligible students not meeting graduation requirements but terminated from formal education having reached age twenty-one includes only two students over the past five school years.

Data Element 11:   The number of eligible students who received transition planning services with the cooperation of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation or Rehabilitation Services for the Blind as part of their IEP.

Note - Vocational rehabilitation services to the blind are provided by Rehabilitation Services for the Blind (RSB) rather than by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. RSB delivers vocational Rehabilitation services to eligible blind/visually impaired students ages 14 and over and to their families statewide (further information may be found at http://www.dese.mo.gov/divspeced/Blind/RSB.html and http://www.dss.mo.gov/fsd/rsb/).

Cooperative IEP Transition Planning Services from Rehabilitative Services for the Blind 2004-2005	
Number of Student Recipients	108
APH Federal Quota Registration Number of Students Age 14-21+	308

Data Source: Data from Rehabilitation Services for the Blind (RSB) as of 10/26/2005.

Findings:

A conservative number of blind/visually impaired students received transition planning services with the cooperation of RSB as part of their IEP for school year 2004-2005 as compared to the number of blind/visually impaired students age 14-21+ reported on the APH Federal Quota Registration.

Data Element 12:   The number of eligible students referred to Rehabilitation Services for the Blind or Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

Note - Rehabilitation services to the blind are provided by Rehabilitation Services for the Blind (RSB) rather than by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. All children ages 0 to 21+ identified as visually impaired upon parental consent or consent of the student (if the student is at least age eighteen) are to be referred from the local education agency to RSB. Additional information concerning the referral process may be found at http://www.dese.mo.gov/divspeced/Blind/RSB.html.

Referrals to Rehabilitative Services for the Blind 2004-2005	
Number of Students Referred	41

Data Source: Data from Rehabilitation Services for the Blind (RSB) as of 10/26/2005.

Findings:

Referral data from Rehabilitation Services for the Blind (RSB) suggest a limited number of blind/visually impaired students were referred to RSB for school year 2004-2005. Referral data from the Blind Literacy Survey 2005 differed; counts yielded a total of 142 eligible students' ages 3-21 that were referred which may include any referral made during the school year to RSB not just students referred for the first time to RSB.

MISSOURI ASSESSMENT PROGRAM (MAP) – PERFORMANCE RESULTS*

Reading:

Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) Performance Results - Reading Proficiency									
GRADE 3	**BLIND**			**PARTIAL SIGHT**			**ALL**		
Number of Students	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**
Reportable	10	13	7	28	17	20	64,899	64,500	64,387
Percent of Students									
Satisfactory and Above	80.0	92.3	85.7	71.4	76.5	80.0	73.4	74.5	77.1
Unsatisfactory	20.0	7.7	14.3	28.6	23.5	20.0	26.6	25.5	22.9
MAP Index	180.0	246.2	228.6	203.6	194.1	215.0	207.8	207.2	212.3
GRADE 7	**BLIND**			**PARTIAL SIGHT**			**ALL**		
Number of Students	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**
Reportable	6	19	20	27	31	21	70,564	72,189	72,349
Percent of Students									
Satisfactory and Above	100.0	31.6	55.0	29.6	32.3	52.4	62.6	62.0	65.1
Unsatisfactory	0.0	68.4	45.0	70.4	67.7	47.6	37.4	38.0	34.9
MAP Index	233.3	152.6	190.0	140.7	151.6	166.7	196.2	195.8	199.1

*NOTES:

Reading Proficiency:
   Reportable – the number of students who earned a valid score in one of the three achievement levels (Proficient, Satisfactory and Unsatisfactory).
   Satisfactory and Above - includes Satisfactory and Proficient achievement levels.
Communication Arts & Mathematics:
   Accountable – the number of students in the grade level being tested.
   Reportable – the number of students who earned a valid score in one of the five achievement levels (Advanced, Proficient, Nearing Proficient, Progressing, and Step 1).
   Level Not Determined – the number of no shows, sick, MAP-A eligible (2003 only), cheated and no valid attempt (equal to the number Accountable minus the number Reportable).
   Percent Top 3 Levels – includes Advanced, Proficient, and Nearing Proficient achievement levels.
   Percent Bottom 2 Levels – includes Progressing and Step 1 achievement levels
MAP Index - a weighted average of the five achievement levels ranging from 100 to 300, 100 indicates all students scored in the lowest achievement level and 300 indicates all students scored in the highest achievement level.
2004 & 2005 MAP data - includes MAP-A achievement level results.

Communication Arts:

<table>
<tr><th colspan="10">Missouri Assessment Program (MAP)
Performance Results - Communication Arts</th></tr>
<tr><th>GRADE 3</th><th colspan="3">BLIND</th><th colspan="3">PARTIAL SIGHT</th><th colspan="3">ALL</th></tr>
<tr><th>Number of Students</th><th>2003</th><th>2004</th><th>2005</th><th>2003</th><th>2004</th><th>2005</th><th>2003</th><th>2004</th><th>2005</th></tr>
<tr><td>Accountable</td><td>10</td><td>14</td><td>8</td><td>29</td><td>17</td><td>20</td><td>65,957</td><td>65,140</td><td>65,002</td></tr>
<tr><td>Reportable</td><td>10</td><td>13</td><td>7</td><td>28</td><td>17</td><td>20</td><td>64,899</td><td>64,500</td><td>64,387</td></tr>
<tr><td>Percent of Students</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Level Not Determined</td><td>0.0</td><td>7.1</td><td>12.5</td><td>3.4</td><td>0.0</td><td>0.0</td><td>1.6</td><td>1.0</td><td>0.9</td></tr>
<tr><td>Top 3 Levels</td><td>80.0</td><td>92.3</td><td>85.7</td><td>67.9</td><td>70.6</td><td>75.0</td><td>73.6</td><td>74.4</td><td>75.7</td></tr>
<tr><td>Bottom 2 Levels</td><td>20.0</td><td>7.7</td><td>14.3</td><td>32.1</td><td>29.4</td><td>25.0</td><td>26.4</td><td>25.6</td><td>24.3</td></tr>
<tr><td>MAP Index</td><td>195.0</td><td>219.2</td><td>207.1</td><td>185.7</td><td>197.1</td><td>195.0</td><td>201.0</td><td>201.9</td><td>203.3</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="10"></td></tr>
<tr><th>GRADE 7</th><th colspan="3">BLIND</th><th colspan="3">PARTIAL SIGHT</th><th colspan="3">ALL</th></tr>
<tr><th>Number of Students</th><th>2003</th><th>2004</th><th>2005</th><th>2003</th><th>2004</th><th>2005</th><th>2003</th><th>2004</th><th>2005</th></tr>
<tr><td>Accountable</td><td>6</td><td>21</td><td>22</td><td>27</td><td>31</td><td>28</td><td>72,299</td><td>73,297</td><td>73,662</td></tr>
<tr><td>Reportable</td><td>6</td><td>19</td><td>20</td><td>27</td><td>31</td><td>21</td><td>70,564</td><td>72,189</td><td>72,349</td></tr>
<tr><td>Percent of Students</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Level Not Determined</td><td>0.0</td><td>9.5</td><td>9.1</td><td>0.0</td><td>0.0</td><td>25.0</td><td>2.4</td><td>1.5</td><td>1.8</td></tr>
<tr><td>Top 3 Levels</td><td>100.0</td><td>31.6</td><td>55.0</td><td>25.9</td><td>22.6</td><td>52.4</td><td>63.7</td><td>62.9</td><td>64.2</td></tr>
<tr><td>Bottom 2 Levels</td><td>0.0</td><td>68.4</td><td>45.0</td><td>74.1</td><td>77.4</td><td>47.6</td><td>36.3</td><td>37.1</td><td>35.8</td></tr>
<tr><td>MAP Index</td><td>216.7</td><td>157.9</td><td>172.5</td><td>146.3</td><td>151.6</td><td>169.0</td><td>191.8</td><td>191.2</td><td>192.3</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="10"></td></tr>
<tr><th>GRADE 11</th><th colspan="3">BLIND</th><th colspan="3">PARTIAL SIGHT</th><th colspan="3">ALL</th></tr>
<tr><th>Number of Students</th><th>2003</th><th>2004</th><th>2005</th><th>2003</th><th>2004</th><th>2005</th><th>2003</th><th>2004</th><th>2005</th></tr>
<tr><td>Accountable</td><td>12</td><td>18</td><td>23</td><td>7</td><td>18</td><td>22</td><td>59,977</td><td>59,978</td><td>60,355</td></tr>
<tr><td>Reportable</td><td>11</td><td>18</td><td>20</td><td>6</td><td>16</td><td>22</td><td>57,880</td><td>58,845</td><td>59,096</td></tr>
<tr><td>Percent of Students</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Level Not Determined</td><td>8.3</td><td>0.0</td><td>13.0</td><td>14.3</td><td>11.1</td><td>0.0</td><td>3.5</td><td>1.9</td><td>2.1</td></tr>
<tr><td>Top 3 Levels</td><td>36.4</td><td>22.2</td><td>50.0</td><td>50.0</td><td>37.5</td><td>27.3</td><td>64.6</td><td>64.4</td><td>64.7</td></tr>
<tr><td>Bottom 2 Levels</td><td>63.6</td><td>77.8</td><td>50.0</td><td>50.0</td><td>62.5</td><td>72.7</td><td>35.4</td><td>35.6</td><td>35.3</td></tr>
<tr><td>MAP Index</td><td>154.5</td><td>136.1</td><td>165.0</td><td>158.3</td><td>159.4</td><td>150.0</td><td>184.8</td><td>185.2</td><td>185.6</td></tr>
</table>

Mathematics:

Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) Performance Results - Mathematics									
GRADE 4	**BLIND**			**PARTIAL SIGHT**			**ALL**		
Number of Students	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**
Accountable	34	12	22	24	19	19	69,437	66,658	66,122
Reportable	34	12	22	23	19	18	68,633	66,259	65,897
Percent of Students									
Level Not Determined	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.2	0.0	5.3	1.2	0.6	0.3
Top 3 Levels	47.1	75.0	59.1	65.2	73.7	72.2	79.7	82.4	83.9
Bottom 2 Levels	52.9	25.0	40.9	34.8	26.3	27.8	20.3	17.6	16.1
MAP Index	167.6	212.5	195.5	191.3	200.0	197.2	210.4	214.4	216.5
GRADE 8	**BLIND**			**PARTIAL SIGHT**			**ALL**		
Number of Students	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**
Accountable	6	20	18	25	29	32	70,680	72,030	73,011
Reportable	6	20	16	25	28	31	69,323	71,158	72,256
Percent of Students									
Level Not Determined	0.0	0.0	11.1	0.0	3.4	3.1	1.9	1.2	1.0
Top 3 Levels	33.3	10.0	25.0	32.0	32.1	25.8	48.8	49.1	49.4
Bottom 2 Levels	66.7	90.0	75.0	68.0	67.9	74.2	51.2	50.9	50.6
MAP Index	175.0	145.0	150.0	152.0	148.2	143.5	173.1	173.4	174.8
GRADE 10	**BLIND**			**PARTIAL SIGHT**			**ALL**		
Number of Students	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**	**2003**	**2004**	**2005**
Accountable	10	22	7	30	23	16	65,707	66,137	67,542
Reportable	10	21	7	30	22	16	63,985	64,898	66,170
Percent of Students									
Level Not Determined	0.0	4.5	0.0	0.0	4.3	0.0	2.6	1.9	2.0
Top 3 Levels	10.0	14.3	42.9	26.7	27.3	37.5	44.6	47.1	46.8
Bottom 2 Levels	90.0	85.7	57.1	73.3	72.7	62.5	55.4	52.9	53.2
MAP Index	120.0	138.1	171.4	143.3	147.7	165.6	167.5	171.1	172.1

Findings:

Since the total number accountable for blind students and for partially sighted students is typically less than 30 (ranging from 6 to 34 each year), percents in the achievement levels in communication arts and mathematics and reading vary considerable from year to year, i.e. the achievement level of one student may effect the achievement level for the disability grouping.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A - Missouri State Plan for Special Education (Part B) – Visual Impairment/Blindness Definition

Visual Impairment/Blindness Definition:

Visual Impairment, including blindness, means an impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness.

Criteria for Initial Determination of Eligibility

A child displays a Visual Impairment when:

    A. a visual impairment or a progressive vision loss has been diagnosed by an optometrist or ophthalmologist:
    B. visual acuity has been determined to be:

        1) for visual impairment, of 20/70 to 20/200 in the better eye with best correction by glasses;
        2) for blindness, of 20/200 or less in the better eye after best correction by glasses or a visual field measuring 20o or less.

    C. the visual impairment adversely affects the child's educational performance.

APPENDIX B - Federal Quota Registration

The Federal Quota Registration is the census that records students who are eligible to receive materials provided by the federal Act to Promote the Education of the Blind. These Federal Quota accounts are maintained and administered by the American Printing House for the Blind (APH) and its Ex Officio Trustees. Instructions are distributed statewide to schools by Missouri School for the Blind (MSB) for the APH Federal Quota Registration as outlined by APH per federal requirements (see http://www.aph.org/fedquotpgm/instr2005.html).

ELIGIBILITY:

In order for students to be eligible for registration in the Federal Quota Program, they MUST meet the requirements as outlined in An Act to Promote the Education of the Blind. Students must:
- Meet the definition of blindness--"central visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye with best correction; a peripheral field so contracted that the widest diameter of such field subtends an angular distance no greater than 20 degrees; or visual performance reduced by a brain injury or dysfunction when visual function meets the definition of blindness as determined by an eye care specialist or neurologist." (Note -the second part of the definition was added to the instructions January 2004).
- Be enrolled in a formally organized public or private, nonprofit educational program of less than college level.
- Be enrolled with the registering school or agency on the first Monday in January. The educational programs providing services to these students can include public, private, and parochial schools. There is NO chronological age limit for eligibility. The federal law limits registration to persons working at less than college level, but places no restriction on the ages of eligible students.

Eligibility of Infants, Preschool Children and Homebound Students - Eligible infants, preschool children, and homebound students can be registered if they are enrolled in a formally organized, regularly scheduled educational or training program and have a written education plan.

Eligibility of Students Who Are Home Schooled - In order for blind students enrolled in home school programs to prove eligible for registration in the Federal Quota Program, the home school program should meet guidelines and/or procedures in effect within each individual state.

INFORMATION TO BE REPORTED:

For each eligible student, the following data must be reported:
- Name
- Date of birth
- School system or agency enrolling the student
- Grade placement
- Measurement of vision in right eye
- Measurement of vision in left eye
- Primary reading medium
- Additional reading media

DEFINITIONS OF REQUIRED INFORMATION AND REPORTING CODES:

Preschool and School Age Students: This is not to include any eligible participants over school age.

Reporting Code	Definition
IP	Infants: Children of preschool age served by infant programs
PS	Preschool Students: Children of preschool age served by preschool programs
KG	Kindergarten Students: Children enrolled in kindergarten classes
01-12	Students of School Age: Determined by state law, in regular academic grades 1 through 12. Please indicate grade placement by using numerals 01 through 12
AN	Academic Non-graded: Students of school age, as determined by state law, who are working to acquire skills necessary for placement in a regular grade.
VO	Vocational Students: Students of school age, as determined by state law, who are in vocational training (e.g., students enrolled in a program which is designed to lead to independent employment). This does not include multi-handicapped students in prevocational programs or classes.
PG	Post-graduate Students: Students of school age, as determined by state law, in post-graduate high school programs, studying at less than college level
OR	Other Registrants: Students of school age, as determined by state law, who do not fall into any of the above placements (e.g., students enrolled in classes for nonacademic students)

- **Vision Measurements and Reporting Codes:**

Reporting Code	Visual Measurement
Example: 20/200 or 20/400	Distance Vision: 20/200 or less with maximum correction using the Snellen Chart
VF	Visual Field: Restricted field of 20 degrees or less
CF	Counts Fingers: Should be used only when an eye specialist finds it is not possible to obtain an acuity using the Snellen Chart
FDB	Functions at the Definition of Blindness: Should be used when visual functioning is reduced by a brain injury or dysfunction and visual acuity is not possible to determine using the Snellen Chart.
HM	Hand Movements: Should be used only when an eye specialist finds it is not possible to obtain an acuity using the Snellen Chart.
OP	Object Perception
LP	Light Perception
NIL	Totally Blind

- **Reading Media:**

Primary Reading Media and Reporting Codes: The primary reading medium is to be reported for each student using the following reporting codes. Only these codes will be accepted. Note: Infants and preschoolers identified as visual, Braille, or auditory readers should be reported using the appropriate media code.

Reporting Code	Primary Reading Medium
V	Visual Readers: Student primarily using print in their studies
B	Braille Readers: Students primarily using Braille in their studies
A	Auditory Readers: Students primarily using a reader or auditory materials in their studies
P	Prereaders: Students working on or toward a readiness level; infants, preschoolers, or older students with reading potential
N	Nonreaders: Nonreading students; students who show no reading potential; students who do not fall into any of the above categories

Additional Reading Media and Reporting Codes (Required Category): In addition to listing a primary reading medium, please check all additional reading media so that a more accurate profile of student literacy can be tracked. Please list all that apply.

Reporting Code	Additional Reading Medium
V	Visual: Students use print to some extent
B	Braille: Students use Braille to some extent
A	Auditory: Students use a reader or auditory materials to some extent
N/A	Not Applicable: Nonreaders, prereaders, or students with no additional reading media

APPENDIX C - MO-DESE Special Education Placement and Dropout Categories

SPECIAL EDUCATION PLACEMENT CATEGORIES
(Descriptions for Screen 11 of Core Data Collection System)

Public Schools - School Age Placement Categories (Ages 5K-22)

Outside Regular Class less than 21 percent of day (This includes the service delivery models of Class within a Class, Regular Curriculum with Modifications, and Parallel Curriculum) - Children with disabilities who receive special education and related services outside the regular classroom for less than 21 percent of the school day. Note: This could include students with disabilities placed in an alternative school program with non-disabled peers.

Outside Regular Class at least 21 percent / No more than 60 percent - Children with disabilities who receive all of their special education and related services outside the regular classroom for at least 21 percent but no more than 60 percent of the school day. **Note:** This could include students with disabilities placed in an alternative school program with non-disabled peers.

Outside Regular Class more than 60 percent of day - Children with disabilities who receive all of their special education and related services outside the regular classroom for more than 60 percent of the school day. This category does not include children who received education programs in public or private separate day or residential facilities. **Note:** This could include students with disabilities placed in an alternative school program with non-disabled peers.

State Operated Separate School - This includes residential and day programs operated by the State Board of Education (School for the Blind, School for the Deaf, and State Schools for the Severely Handicapped). Also include in this category any students that are currently being served under homebound or at a private agency through a state school.

Private Separate (Day) Facility - Children with disabilities who receive all of their special education and related services, at public expense, for greater than 50 percent of the school day in private separate facilities. This includes students with disabilities who are served by a private educational agency other than a parochial school. This includes those approved private agencies with whom districts contract to provide special education services to students within their district.

Public Separate (Day) Facility - Children with disabilities who receive all of their special education and related services for greater than 50 percent of the school day in public separate facilities. This includes those students with disabilities placed by the IEP team in a segregated facility operated by a public school. This *does not* include residential facilities and does not encompass facilities that include non-disabled students such as alternative school programs.

Homebound/Hospital - Due to student's illness, medically fragile condition, or a disciplinary suspension, the student receives special education at home or in a hospital via a visiting teacher or telephone instruction based on the student's IEP.

Private Residential Facility - Children with disabilities who receive all of their special education and related services, at public expense, for greater than 50 percent of the school day in private residential facilities, who are placed by the **public school IEP** team. This *does not* include students living in private residential facilities but attending public schools.

SPECIAL EDUCATION DROPOUT CATEGORIES
(Descriptions for Screen 12 of the Core Data Collection System)

<u>**Dropout Categories (Ages 14-22):**</u>

***Received a Certificate** – Students with disabilities who exited an educational program through the receipt of a certificate of attendance. This includes students who **reached age 21** or otherwise terminated their education and who have met the district's attendance requirements.

***Reached Maximum Age** – Students with disabilities who exited an educational program because they reached the maximum age for receipt of educational services and **did not** receive a diploma **or** certificate of attendance.

***Moved, Not Known to be Continuing** – Students with disabilities who have moved out of the district and are <u>not</u> known to be continuing in any type of educational program (i.e., no records request from another educational program).

***Dropped Out** – Students with disabilities who are enrolled during the year and were not enrolled at the end of the year and did not exit through any of the other categories. This includes dropouts, runaways, expulsions, GED recipients, and status unknown.

* These categories are combined for dropout calculations.

APPENDIX D - Study: Services for Students Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired in Missouri

Heskett, John, Ed.D. <u>Services for Students Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired in Missouri</u>. A Study Commissioned by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Division of Special Education, July 2005.

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Division of Special Education commissioned a study regarding services for children who are blind or visually impaired (VI) in Missouri. The study was designed to elicit information from key stakeholder groups throughout the state regarding the following major research questions:

1. What are the critical skills needed by students who are blind or VI to achieve successful educational and adult outcomes?
2. What are the necessary supports students require to develop the critical skills?
3. Which of the critical skills are local school districts and the Missouri School for the Blind adequately developing and which are not being adequately developed for students?
4. What role should the Missouri School for the Blind (MSB) assume in the education of students who are blind or VI?
5. What changes need to be made regarding training, policies, roles of different agencies (school districts, MSB, Blindness Skills Specialists, Rehabilitation Services for the Blind), funding streams, etc. for MSB and local school districts to more effectively meet the needs of students who are blind or VI?
6. What are effective ways to utilize current and possible future outreach staff from MSB?

The DESE Request for Proposal specified that data should be collected from a variety of sources to respond to these queries. Specifically, DESE anticipated that a series of Focus Groups and surveys be conducted with students, parents, general education and special education teachers, local school district administrators of special education services, recent graduates of school programs, employers, and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors with the Rehabilitation Services for the Blind.

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The study has been designed to meet the requirements of the DESE Request for Proposal.
Focus Groups and Surveys were conducted throughout the state. The initial component was a survey conducted in association with the April, 2005 <u>Children's Vision</u> <u>Summit</u> sponsored by the Task Force on Blind Student Academic and Vocational Performance (Task Force), the Rehabilitation Services for the Blind (RSB) and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). Secondly, focus groups were conducted with students, parents, general education and special education staff in local school districts, local school district administrators, Blindness Skills Specialists and other interested parties in seven locations throughout the state - - Cape Girardeau, Columbia, Kansas City, Kirksville, Missouri School for the Blind, Springfield, and St. Louis. Local school districts in each region (within a forty mile radius of the host school district) that reported children with visual impairments on their December 1 Child Count for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act were invited to attend the Focus Group.   Members of the Task Force also

attended the Focus Groups.   The third component included telephone surveys with Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors associated with the Rehabilitation Services for the Blind. Finally, telephone surveys were conducted with a number of individuals who are blind or VI who had graduated from high school within the past two years.

In addition, the study has incorporated other design elements to utilize information available from other sources. First, the Principal Investigator conducted interviews with leadership from key stakeholder groups to discuss the design of the study and obtain their perspectives relative to the major research questions. The stakeholder groups included leadership from:
1.   Rehabilitation Services for the Blind and the Advisory Council for Rehabilitation Services for the Blind,
2.   Task Force on Blind Student Academic and Vocational Performance,
3.   Faculty and staff from Southwest Missouri State University (this university was selected because it is the only Missouri institution with training programs for teachers of the visually impaired and orientation and mobility instructors), and
4.   Missouri School for the Blind.

Secondly, the Principal Investigator conducted a literature review regarding policy recommendations offered in recent years relevant to the design and delivery of services for students who are blind or VI. Policy recommendations from the American Foundation for the Blind, the Council for Exceptional Children, the Texas School for the Blind, the National Association of State Directors of Special Education, and the Vanderbilt University were reviewed for this study.

Finally, the Principal Investigator reviewed studies and recommendations specific to Missouri conducted pursuant to statutory requirements; ie., 162.1130 RSMo. – Task Force on Blind Student Academic and Vocational Performance, and 162.1136, RSMo. – Annual Blind Literacy Study. These reports were reviewed to identify areas of concern and specific recommendations that have been made to improve educational services for students who are blind or VI.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Literature Review Regarding Policies for the Education of Students who are Blind or VI.
One of the most comprehensive statements of policy regarding the development of appropriate services for students who are blind or VI came from the American Foundation for the Blind in the National Report to the Nation: The National Agenda for the Education of Children and Youth with Visual Impairments, Including Those with Multiple Disabilities, (Corn, 1995) and the revised publication of the original work (Huebner, 2004). The National Agenda contained a set of National Goals, strategies, and achievements that have provided strong guidance relative to the education of students who are blind or VI.   The National Goals include:
- Goal 1 - - Students and their families will be referred to an appropriate education program within 30 days of identification of a suspected visual impairment. Teachers of students with visual impairments and orientation and mobility instructors will provide appropriate quality services.
- Goal 2 - - Policies and procedures will be implemented to ensure the rights of all parents to full participation and equal partnership in the education process.
- Goal 3 - - Universities with a minimum of one full-time faculty member in the area of Visual Impairments will prepare a sufficient number of teachers and orientation and mobility specialists for students with visual impairments to meet the personnel preparation needs throughout the country.
- Goal 4 - - Caseloads will be determined based on the assessed needs of students.
- Goal 5 - - Local education programs will ensure that all students have access to a full array of service delivery options.
- Goal 6 - - All assessments and evaluations of students will be conducted by or in partnership with personnel having expertise in the education of students with visual impairments and their parents.

- Goal 7 - - Access to developmental and educational services will include an assurance that textbooks and instructional materials are available to students in the appropriate media and at the same time as their sighted peers.
- Goal 8 - - All educational goals and instruction will address the academic and expanded core curricula based on the needs of each student with visual impairments.
- Goal 9 - - Transition services will address developmental and educational needs (birth through high school) to assist students and their families in setting goals and implementing strategies through the life continuum commensurate with the students' aptitudes, interests, and abilities.
- Goal 10 - - To improve students' learning, service providers will engage in ongoing local, state and national professional development. (Huebner, 2004)

From an instructional standpoint, one of the principal contributions of the National Agenda has been a coalescence of thought regarding the critical skills needed by students with visual impairments. The core curriculum and expanded core curriculum expressed by the National Agenda reflects the belief that students with visual impairments have two basic needs. First is a curricular experience which parallels that of their sighted peers. Students with visual impairments require appropriate instruction to develop competencies in the standard curricular
areas that all other students are expected to demonstrate - - competencies in communication arts, mathematics, science, social studies, health and physical education, foreign language, fine arts and practical arts.

In addition, students with visual impairments have unique instructional needs as well. The "expanded core curriculum" may include, but not be limited to, the following:
- Compensatory Skills, such as Communication Modes (Braille, Visual Efficiency, Listening Skills),
- Orientation and Mobility,
- Social Interaction Skills,
- Independent Living Skills,
- Recreation and Leisure Skills,
- Career Education,
- Use of Assistive Technology,
- Visual Efficiency Skills, and
- Self Determination (Huebner, 2004)

The National Association of State Directors of Special Education (in association with The American Council of the Blind, American Foundation for the Blind, American Printing House for the Blind, Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind, Association of Instructional Resource Centers for the Visually Impaired, Council for Exceptional Children, Council of Schools for the Blind, Perkins School for the Blind, the National Agenda Planning Group, National Association for Parents of the Visually Impaired and State Consultants for Services to Visually Impaired Students) published Blind and Visually Impaired Students: Educational Service Guidelines (Pugh, 1999). This publication has provided extensive recommendations for State Education Agencies regarding the development and support of strong educational programs for students with visual impairments. The report builds upon the work reflected in the National Agenda and further encourages appropriate services through recognition of the needs for:
1. supportive and appropriate program structures and administration,
2. appropriate assessment of students,
3. high standards in program requirements and placement options, and
4. personnel standards that reflect the uniqueness associated with blindness / visual impairments.

The Council for Exceptional Children developed a National Plan for Training Personnel to Serve Children with Blindness and Low Vision (Mason and Davidson, 2000). Following a comprehensive review of national strengths, needs and concerns, the CEC recommended:
1. A national network to support personnel preparation and technical assistance to ensure an adequate and appropriately trained supply of teachers and other professionals involved in the education of visually impaired students,

2. Support for a National Leadership Development Institute to develop mechanisms and programs to support professional development of present and future leaders in the field; and, support application of research to practice in blindness and low vision,
3. Development and support of a national comprehensive and cohesive recruitment campaign to increase the number of personnel serving the visually impaired population.

The application of national studies to local practice can be difficult. Educators and other leaders often face challenges when applying national goals and models to their local programs. Such reviews may challenge long held notions and assumptions regarding the appropriateness of services and placements that have developed over many years. Phillip Hatlen (Hatlen, 2003) Superintendent of the Texas School for the Blind and co-author of the National Agenda (1995), has written extensively regarding the evolution of schools for the blind. Hatlen writes that the 1980s was a decade where schools for the blind began to take charge of their own destiny. He observed a change from the notion that state schools for the blind served only those students whom the local schools were not able to serve, to a notion that placed schools for the blind in a partnership with local schools districts and parents to provide a range of services for students who are blind.   Off campus or outreach programs have emerged to provide instruction in individualized academic and practical curriculum, career education, self esteem, education for challenging students and extra curricular activities (Hatlen, Fall, 2003). In addition, campus programs for students have changed to provide alternatives such as summer programs and short classes (Hatlen, Fall, 2003). The Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired has maintained a strong residential program option for students who are blind or VI. In addition, it has supported local school districts efforts to provide appropriate services through off-campus programs; and, developed curricular offerings at the campus school in spatially formatted academic subjects that are particularly difficult for Braille-reading students, such as science, mathematics and geography.

H.B. 401 - -   Task Force on Academic and Vocational Performance Reports and Missouri Blind Literacy Reports.
House Bill 401 was enacted in 1999. Among other provisions, this legislation created the Task Force on Academic and Vocational Performance. The legislation specifies:
A task force on blind student academic and vocational performance is hereby established and shall be comprised of members appointed by the commissioner of education, in cooperation with the director of the department of social services, to represent consumer organizations, parents, teachers, public school special education administrators, school building principals, rehabilitation services for the blind, the Missouri school for the blind, employers, and others interested in quality services for blind students. This task force shall develop goals and objectives to guide the improvement of special education, related services, vocational training, transition from school to work, rehabilitation services, independent living and employment outcomes for eligible students. (Section 1133.3.3 RSMo.)

The Task Force on Blind Student Academic and Vocational Performance meets regularly throughout the year. It has standing committees dealing with Governmental Affairs, Transition and the Annual Study. In addition the Task Force has undertaken study on other topics including Teacher Certification, Orientation and Mobility Training programs, and status of the National Agenda. The minutes of the Task Force meetings provide a careful presentation of current issues and concerns regarding the education of students who are blind or VI.   The Task Force has dealt effectively with numerous issues. Particularly relevant for this report is the work the Task Force has done with respect to an analysis and recommendations regarding Teacher Certification for Teachers of the Blind / Visually Impaired, supporting and coordinating the Blindness Skills Specialist Program, and sponsorship of the Children's Vision Summit.

In addition, H.B. 401 requires an annual assessment of literacy for students who are blind or visually impaired with a report made to the General Assembly. Specifically, the legislation requires the report to include:

(1) The methodology of the study;

(2) The percentage of eligible students in the study who read Braille, print, or large print;

(3) The number of students who have a visual impairment sufficient to meet the definition "eligible student", as defined in section 162.1130;

(4) The number of students currently reading Braille, large print and standard print. The report shall also detail how many eligible students there are by age, grade level, ungraded and with multiple handicaps, who are enrolled in public school, or in the Missouri school for the blind, respectively;

(5) The number of Braille-reading students who no longer receive any instruction in Braille reading and writing but do receive materials in Braille and Braille-related services;

(6) The number of certified vision teachers or teachers of the blind or visually impaired who are currently employed in the field in the state of Missouri;

(7) The number of eligible students who use a slate and stylus and/or other devices* in writing Braille;

(8) The number of eligible students educated in the general education classroom, in an itinerant or resource classroom, in a self-contained classroom or in a separate educational facility;

(9) The graduation rate of eligible students compared to those students who are not disabled;

(10) The number of eligible students who did not meet graduation requirements but were terminated from formal education having reached age twenty-one years;

(11) The number of eligible students who received transition planning services with the cooperation of the division of vocational rehabilitation or rehabilitation services for the blind as part of their IEP;

(12) The number of eligible students referred to rehabilitation services for the blind or division of vocational rehabilitation. (Section 1136.2 RSMo)

The Missouri Blindness Literacy Studies have been completed and reported as required since 1999. The reader is referenced to the complete reports found on the DESE Website at www.dese.state.mo.us//divsped .   Relevant data from the Blindness Literacy Reports will be incorporated into this report as components of the data collected to respond to the six Major Research Questions.

Responses to the Six Research Questions - - Results of the Focus Groups, Surveys, Interviews, Literature Review and Statutory Report Data Review

Data were collected in a variety of venues for this report. First, data were collected via a series of Focus Groups conducted throughout the state. Attendees included students, parents, teachers, school administrators, and representatives from the Task Force on Academic and Vocational Performance. Invitations were sent to administrators of school districts within a 30 to 50 mile radius of the host school district that reported Blind or VI students on the December 1 Child Count. The invitations requested the attendance of students who are blind or VI, parents, teachers and school administrators.

The Focus Groups were conducted in the following school districts: Cape Girardeau, Columbia, Kirksville, Raytown, Springfield, St. Louis County Special School District, and at the Missouri School for the Blind. Responses were obtained from 24 students, 23 parents, 51 teachers and administrators, and 9 other respondents representing members of the Task Force, Blindness Skills Specialists and university faculty.

The Focus Groups were organized such that teachers and administrators participated in one focus group and parents and students in another focus group. In all, fifteen focus groups were conducted. Facilitation of the focus groups resulted in the identification of consensus responses to the research questions.

A second source of data were interviews conducted with leadership from the Task Force on Academic and Vocational Performance, the Rehabilitation Services for the Blind (RSB) and the Advisory Council for the RSB, the Missouri School for the Blind, and faculty and staff from the College of Education at Southwest Missouri State University.

Third, the Investigator was invited to make a presentation at the 2005 Children's Vision Summit and obtained written responses to surveys from participants who included primary consumers, parents, teachers, school administrators, university faculty, and state agency representatives. Twenty-seven written surveys were received.

A fourth source of data were telephone surveys with 7 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors employed with RSB and from 3 recent graduates from high school who are blind or visually impaired. Follow-up with the recent graduates proved to be the most difficult aspect of data collection for this study. Because of the low numbers, the investigator utilized data from the 2001 Literacy Report in which 113 written surveys were mailed to recent graduates with a return of 25 useable responses.

Finally, literature reviews and reports previously mentioned in this report are the fifth source of data for this report.

What are the critical skills needed by students who are blind or VI to achieve successful educational and adult outcomes?

Elements of the "expanded core curriculum" (Corn, 1999 and Huebner, 2004) emerged as the prominent responses of the majority of focus group participants. Fifteen of the fifteen (15 out of 15) focus groups agreed that Braille and Nemeth, Orientation and Mobility and Daily Living Skills were critical skills. Other prominent consensus responses included Assistive Technology (12 focus groups), Social Skills and Social Interaction (11 focus groups), Self Determination / Self Advocacy (10 focus groups), and general education curriculum competency (9 focus groups). Other skills identified by 5 or fewer focus groups included Recreation/Leisure, Employability Skills, Visual Efficiency, Note-taking, Computer Skills and Listening Skills. Certainly, one should not assume that those skills identified five times or fewer are not important. However, when asked to prioritize those that are critical, they received less support than others identified previously.

Telephone interviews with Rehabilitation Counselors provided a somewhat different response. While recognizing the importance of areas mentioned above, the Rehabilitation Counselors placed far greater emphasis on independent living, career education, transition, work experiences while still in school, technology competence and resilience. Their orientation to adult situations provided a distinctly more functional orientation to the considerations.

Similarly, interviews with recent graduates and the results of the graduate follow-up study done as a part of the 2001 Literacy Report (DESE, 2001) were supportive of the efforts of high schools and RSB to prepare the graduates for post-secondary education. However, those same respondents felt they were inadequately prepared for employment. Clearly, career education, transition and work skills emerge as critical skills for students who are blind or VI.

What are the necessary supports students require to develop the critical skills?

Availability of adequately trained personnel, including teachers, paraprofessionals, O&M instructors and therapists was a consensus statement in 15 out of 15 focus groups. In addition, 9 out of 15 focus groups identified professional development, 7 out of 15 identified access to appropriate materials (Braille, large print, etc.), and 7 out of 15 identified the availability of Technical Assistance and Outreach Staff to support the implementation of services for students.

Also identified as necessary supports was the availability of technology and instruction in computer skills by 6 out of 15 focus groups.   Elements of the Blindness Literacy Study, 2001 (DESE, 2001) also identify the need for quality instruction by competent staff and the availability of appropriate technology as necessary supports for the education of students who are blind or VI.

Which of the critical skills are local school districts and the MSB adequately developing and which are not being adequately developed for students?

Two general observations can be made regarding this question. First, the relative availability of adequately trained personnel had a significant impact on the responses. In those areas of the state where staff were available (primarily in urban and suburban areas), participants expressed confidence that most of the expanded core curriculum was being adequately addressed by the schools, particularly Braille, O&M, and Daily Living Skills. This was particularly true of responses from teachers and administrators. It was less evident in the responses of parents. Parents and students in five of the focus groups indicated a need for stronger instruction in elements of the expanded core curriculum, as did the staff at the Missouri School for the Blind when commenting on the relative skill levels of students who were enrolling in MSB from other educational programs.

Interestingly, a secondary concern was raised by participants regarding how well critical skills would be addressed in the future. Respondents were aware that several of the appropriately trained staff were approaching retirement age. Respondents were unsure who would be available to continue the instruction.

High school graduates pointed out that schools were not meeting the instructional needs of students with respect to the availability of accessible materials, particularly in the areas of mathematics, science and geography (DESE, 2001).

Another common point of consensus in focus groups (7 out of 15) was that assistive technology was not being adequately addressed statewide. Concerns were expressed regarding the availability of contemporary computer equipment and software, and the use of technology devices that are being developed for such things as note taking. The 2001 Literacy Report also documented a need for additional training for teachers in the use of technology and adequate funding from local school districts to acquire necessary technology (DESE, 2001).

The development of appropriate social interaction skills and the availability of social networks were identified by 10 out of 15 focus groups as critical skills that were not being adequately addressed. The very low incidence of the disability often results in isolation of the student who is blind or VI. Participants often expressed concerns about this and a desire for extracurricular opportunities for students with similar disabilities and a coordinated statewide network to facilitate interactions and friendships.

What role should the Missouri School for the Blind (MSB) assume in the education of students who are blind or VI? What are effective ways to utilize current and possible future outreach staff from MSB?

These questions have been combined because of their close relationship to one another.

All of the focus groups concurred that the MSB must have a prominent role in the education of students who are blind or VI. Likewise, focus groups concurred that MSB needs to obtain resources necessary to maintain a strong residential and educational program for certain students. In addition, respondents asserted the need for MSB to develop flexible campus based and regional services responsive to the needs of the students, parents and schools. These data are consistent with the reports from Hatlen in The Evolution of the Schools for the Blind in the 21st Century (Hatlen, 2003)

Specifically, 11 out of 15 focus groups reached consensus on MSB developing short-term flexible placement options for students. During such placements, students would be given the opportunities to concentrate on the development of particular competencies or skills needed at the student's present time. After initial mastery or competency is achieved, the student would return to their home community. Respondents saw a far more dynamic nature to placements at the MSB that encouraged movement from their home community to MSB and return as the instructional needs of the student dictated.

Six out of fifteen (6 of 15) focus groups reached consensus that MSB must expand the Outreach and Assessment Program and develop regionalized services. This request was prominent in rural areas. Respondents visualized opportunities for the Blindness Skills Specialists and current Outreach staff at MSB to work in a more coordinated, rather than divided, fashion to respond to the needs of students and school district staff. Participants anticipated that the functions of the BSS and Outreach staff could be duplicative so long as the staff assumed separate geographic responsibilities.

However, even if the Blindness Skills Specialist (BSS) and Outreach staff are functionally merged to provide technical assistance, service needs may still out-strip available staff. In several of the rural areas, focus groups expressed strong agreement that MSB should partner with local school districts to "buy-out" portions of the employment contract of highly qualified VI and O&M staff who were not needed full time in their employing district. These staff would be retained in the field of VI, and, made available as a component of the MSB Outreach Program to serve the needs of otherwise un-served or under-served students. Particularly in rural focus groups, participants viewed an expanded outreach effort by the MSB as central to improving educational opportunities for blind and VI students. Despite best efforts, personnel in rural areas opined that staff shortages would remain an issue. The alleviation of this persistent issue could be achieved through an expanded outreach program that would bring qualified staff to bear on a regional level in rural portions of the state.

Eight out of fifteen (8 / 15) focus groups reached consensus on MSB serving as the facilitator of a statewide program to support the development of social support systems for students. In addition, these focus groups also concurred that MSB should be a focal point in the development of statewide parent training and support programs. Similar to previous themes already reported, the participants believed that both student social experiences and parent training and support must have effective regional components in addition to a state level component offered out of the MSB campus.

Finally, 8 out of 15 focus groups expressed a strong desire for the MSB to assume a more prominent role in professional development for professionals and paraprofessionals throughout the state. Several participants expressed a desire for MSB to reinstate programs like the "Weekend with the Experts", and, develop a coordinated statewide professional development effort of sufficient magnitude and scope to attract prominent leaders in the field of visual impairments.

What changes need to be made regarding training, policies, roles of different agencies (DESE, MSB, RSB, school districts, Blindness Skills Specialist-BSS), funding streams, etc. for MSB and local school districts to more effectively meet the needs of students who are blind or VI?

Missouri policymakers are fortunate to have access to a rich source of information from which to draw to make recommendations and identify changes that are necessary to improve services for students who are blind or VI. This section of the report identifies changes that may be needed in the systems serving children who are blind or VI. In arriving at the recommendations, the Investigator has drawn from:

- The results of the Focus Groups, interviews and surveys conducted with students, parents, professionals and advocates during the Spring of 2005
- Reports and recommendations from national organizations including the American Foundation for the Blind, the National Association of State Directors of Special Education and the Council of Exceptional Children
- Data and recommendations from the Task Force on Academic Achievement and Vocational Performance and the Missouri Blindness Literacy Reports.

The following recommendations from the Investigator synthesize the data collected for this report and attempt to present a comprehensive statement regarding service enhancements for consideration by policy leaders responsible for the education of students who are blind or VI:

1. Twelve out of fifteen (12 / 15) Focus Groups achieved consensus on the recommendation that a structured process be undertaken to develop and inculcate a Shared Vision regarding the education of students who are blind or VI among MSB staff, RSB staff, parents, school administrators, teachers, university faculty and staff, advocacy organizations, private providers, etc. Roles, rules, fiscal and human resources, and responsibilities traditionally assumed by these entities should be examined with the commitment to organize these resources in a fashion supportive of a Shared Vision for quality education.

2. Educators and others interested in the education of students who are blind or VI must commit themselves to high expectations for all students who are blind or VI. Students' academic and adult outcomes are dependent on the adoption of high expectations for all. All students must be afforded:

   - High quality instruction in academics and the expanded core curriculum provided by highly qualified staff
   - Access to assistive technology that will allow blind and VI students to interact with their environment in a manner reflective of their capabilities
   - Access to appropriate instructional materials in a manner consistent with the National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standards (NIAMS) as outlined in IDEA, 2004.
   - Access to high quality transition planning, vocational education, and employment experiences as a part of the high school experience.

3. Nine out of fifteen (9 / 15) Focus Groups concurred that a review of personnel preparation is needed in Missouri to appropriately respond to the personnel needs of local school districts.

   - Certification standards should be reviewed to ensure that prospective teachers are appropriately trained with respect to Braille, Nemeth Code, Assistive Technology and other competencies necessary to ensure students' needs relative to the expanded core curriculum are met.
   - Local school districts, using professional development funds, and universities, using appropriations and available external funding sources, should allocate the financial resources necessary to support Teacher Education and Orientation and Mobility education for aspiring educators. The low incidence of the blind / VI population may require state level consideration for additional financial support for these programs.
   - Personnel preparation should ensure an appropriate level of practicum and mentoring support of prospective and new personnel in the field. University, MSB and school staff can work together to accomplish this and thereby better ensure lower attrition of staff from the field.
   - DESE should review certification standards to ensure that fully certificated professionals from other states that meet standards comparable to those in Missouri are given the opportunity for full certification in Missouri.

4. The role of the MSB should be reviewed and consideration given to the following:

   - Continued availability of a strong residential and educational programs
   - Curriculum review and revision to ensure that curriculum at MSB is aligned with the Grade Level Expectations and grade level assessments developed by DESE
   - Assurance that MSB is able to provide training, technical support and assistance in accessing assistive technology required by students who are blind or VI

- Development of flexible service delivery models capable of providing intensive instruction in critical skill areas for students for short periods of time (summer programs or other short-term service models).
- Redefinition and expansion of Outreach Services that have a regional capacity and draw on resources from MSB, Blindness Skills Specialists, fully certificated local school district staff, and Children's Specialists from RSB to meet the needs of rural Missouri and other schools districts with technical assistance and support needs.
- Assume a position of leadership among school districts, private providers, other state agency personnel and university faculty to coordinate and facilitate a comprehensive program of personnel development for professionals and paraprofessionals working with blind and VI students throughout the state.
- Coordinate the establishment of a statewide social support network for students who are blind or VI. Such a network should provide multiple opportunities for students to join together physically in a common location or via electronic means to develop meaningful social networks with students who are similarly situated.
- Coordinate the development of regional and statewide parent training and support networks for parents of students who are blind or VI. Parents in focus groups consistently expressed the desire for meaningful interaction with experts and other parents as they respond to the ongoing challenges of parenting.

SUMMARY

This report examines the strengths and needs regarding educational services for students who are blind or VI. Care has been taken to review relevant data from national organizations, Missouri organizations, existing reports and studies regarding educational services for students who are blind or VI, and new data gathered through meetings and focus groups with key stakeholders in Missouri. The recommendations have been compiled based on the input from key stakeholders and a review of relevant research and policy papers reviewed in this report.

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